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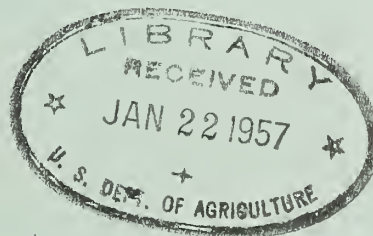
BOOK NUMBER A275.2
Or4

RECOMMENDATIONS
for
ORIENTATION OF FOREIGN PARTICIPANTS IN AGRICULTURE

The report of an appraisal study by the ICA-USDA
Committee on Orientation of Foreign Participants
designated in May 1955.

Tasks assigned to the Committee were to study,
analyze, and evaluate the adequacy of the present
orientation process and program and to revise the
present program in line with the above findings.

March 9, 1956



ER&T-79(3-56)

FOREWORD

This report summarizes in the form of recommendations an appraisal study of the adequacy of the current "orientation program" designed to assist foreign agricultural participants to live and study in the United States.

Each year some 1,200 technicians, specialists, and leaders from 60 or more countries come to the USA under ICA sponsorship to secure specialized information and training experience in agriculture, home economics, and rural development. Many hundreds more come for similar purposes but under different auspices. Each participant is a product of his own culture and institutions. After a brief period in Washington, D. C., usually one or two weeks, he is sent out to join our cultural and institutional system for the purpose of learning special information, techniques, concepts and relationships which he can adapt to his own home country and personal career situation.

This study has revealed that much of the satisfaction and accomplishment of participants, as well as many of their disappointments and problems, can be traced directly to the adequacy of their orientation. The learning process is an individual matter of understanding, testing, accepting, adapting and using. The participant achieves for himself the necessary psychological, cultural, social, even physical adjustments involved; it clears the way for him to live and study in the USA. Actually, this process begins long before the participant leaves his home country; it continues more or less actively throughout his sojourn here and after his return to his career situation at home.

The Committee recognizes the broader implications of total orientation, especially the need for understanding by participants of the overall philosophy and objectives of ICA's technical cooperation program. To insure continuity of understanding and good relations, this technical program encourages a two-way interchange of ideas and materials; cooperation and self-help are combined toward a mutual aim of economic and social progress. Thus, in its broader sense, effective orientation must have lasting influences on participants and its "adequacy" is best measured by the attitudes and efforts demonstrated by participants after their return home.

The principal focus of this report is on developing better ways and means of helping the individual participant to adjust to the American scene in which he seeks training--i.e., personal adjustment to our rural, social and economic pattern, our agricultural industry, our institutions and ways of doing. It was for this narrower purpose that the Committee was designated in May 1955.

The major work in this study has been accomplished by four subcommittees created to analyze and evaluate four stages in the orientation process, namely, the "Predeparture Period," the "First In-Washington Period," the "Midprogram Period," and the "Final In-Washington Period." The recommendations which make up the body of this report were derived from the findings of the subcommittees. One hundred and ten foreign participants were interviewed to secure specific data and more than 30 USDA and ICA representatives contributed to the study in some way.

A special committee made up of the chairmen of the subcommittees with Dr. Lewis P. McCann, as chairman, collated and correlated the findings of the four subcommittees and brought them together into a composite report.

The Committee invites thorough discussion of its recommendations and urges that a new special committee be created to carry through changes needed in the present program.

THE COMMITTEE

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RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF ORIENTATION

The Committee on Orientation of Foreign Participants submits for study and discussion a number of recommendations which should assure a more effective and better coordinated program of preparing participants for their difficult task of living, working and learning-through-experience in the U.S.A. These recommendations appear under headings which roughly describe the "stages" or phases at which so-called "formal" orientation should be provided.

PREDEPARTURE PERIOD OF ORIENTATION

Predeparture orientation is conceived as including not only the orientation of individually selected participants coming to the United States, but also the establishment of a general climate and system of operation which will be conducive to effective understanding. It is recommended that more time be devoted, as appropriate, to predeparture orientation in the home country. The following specific points for improvement and increased emphasis also are recommended in order to encompass the above-mentioned aspects of orientation:

1. English proficiency. Despite all efforts, the handicap of inadequate English continues to be one of the most important factors limiting effective training. Predeparture procedures need to increase emphasis on English training and provide for more definite means of determining language proficiency. Language training in the United States is expensive, both in cost and use of the participant's time, and should not be relied upon except in emergency instances. Special attention to word connotation and scientific language in the participant's field of work is required. Provision for English language training facilities needs to be increased in many countries. English language requirements may be waived for short-time visitors (not more than 3 months) who are provided with qualified interpreters and who fall in one of the following categories:

- a. High-level officials.
- b. Groups of trainees with common interests and levels of education.

2. Participant attitude in relation to training objectives. Participants need to understand from the beginning that their trip to the United States is a working assignment related to a specific project jointly developed by their own countries and ICA. This policy needs to be emphasized even before participants are selected in order to promote clear and definite understanding.

3. Participant and program information. Technicians should determine and discuss with each participant the country project, training objectives, previous background and experience, and proposed work upon return. Any conflicts between the participant's interest and written program objectives and between bio-data and the work program should be resolved. Technicians should prepare a supplemental statement to be sent to ICA/W covering the above points whenever there is any doubt or conflict and whenever bio-data and PIO/P statements do not fully cover the situation and training objectives. Although participant's preference for places of training may be indicated, it should be understood that there can be no commitments in this regard.

The possibility of requesting participants to prepare a special, signed statement of agreed-upon interests and purposes of training may be considered. This would serve to firmly orient them to objectives and eliminate conflicts in programing. In countries where governments are asking participants to take training in fields outside their interests and experience, this would be especially important. Such statements would, of course, be cleared through and forwarded by the USOM's.

4. Use of previous participant reports and contacts. Participants should be required, as part of their predeparture orientation, to study reports to governments submitted by former participants in the same or similar fields and, where feasible, to have interviews with former participants. USOM's and the participating governments should be responsible for reproduction of such reports of returned participants and making them available to new or prospective participants for orientation purposes. In addition, a wider distribution of these reports would encourage better reporting and generally initiate prospective participants even before individual selection is made.

5. Participants' training responsibilities. Participants should receive an initial stimulus to their responsibilities after returning home for passing on to others the information gained through their training. The emphasis should be on making them conscious of the need and potential for disseminating information in their own countries. They should be alert to means, methods, and techniques used to disseminate information in the United States, but recognizing at all times the need for adaptation and adjustment to their home cultures.

6. Systematic selection procedures and policies. Missions should plan and develop with cooperating governments definite, long-range policies and procedures for the selection of participants and the use of participants in future training programs at home. Such arrangements will help to solve problems mentioned in the foregoing recommendations by making all prospective participants conscious of the needs and terms of a training assignment to the United States.

7. Working conditions in the U.S.A. In addition to the "Handbook for Travelers in the U.S.A.," the orientation should emphasize such things as costs and the judicious management of money, keeping of appointments, and clothing requirements. Personal advice and assistance regarding social customs in the United States should supplement the Handbook insofar as possible.

8. Programs to Missions. That proposed programs sent to the Mission be discussed thoroughly with the participant well before he leaves his country.

It is recommended that these important factors of predeparture orientation, as appropriate, be incorporated in the Administration Manual of the International Cooperation Administration.

INITIAL WASHINGTON ORIENTATION PERIOD

The context and procedures for handling programs of orientation for participants in their initial stay in Washington are very important. It is during this period that they gain first contact and insight into the life and customs of the United States and also a preliminary introduction to subject matter interests. The following recommendations are suggested for the improvement of orientation procedures during this period.

9. Study of written materials. That, whenever possible, copies of written material on subject matter be made available to the participant one or more days prior to the time it is to be presented and discussed. This will give the participant an opportunity to become somewhat acquainted with the content and place him in a better position to understand the subject to be discussed. It is also recommended that a quiet place for study be provided for the use of participants.

10. Shorter sessions. That the USDA portion of orientation be broken up into shorter sessions with more time for participants to ask questions about the subjects being discussed. This would help eliminate some of the misconceptions participants have when they leave Washington for field study.

11. Visual aids. That more visual aids be used by all agencies during the period of orientation.

12. American life and customs. An understanding of American life and customs is a basic orientation need. We recommend that more emphasis be placed on this kind of orientation in the home country. We also recommend that supplementary orientation of this nature should be emphasized in Washington, D. C., and in the States.

13. Program objectives.

a. That ICA, in its first meetings with participants, continue to emphasize the objectives of the program and help participants understand that the objectives as shown in the program reflect the wishes of their government and the ICA mission concerned.

b. That the program committee working with the participant in Washington determine whether or not he understands his objectives and purposes, and if he needs further discussion that this be done before he leaves Washington for the States.

14. Orientation on civil rights. That increased emphasis be placed on orientation on civil rights and, especially for dark-skinned participants, on racial segregation.

15. Translation of common words and phrases. That more effort be made to provide participants with translations of the most commonly used agricultural and home economics words and phrases.

16. Relationship of United States organizations and institutions.

That greater effort be made to explain to participants the various United States institutions and organizations and their relationship. Especially explain in simple terms the relationship and organization of agricultural education, research, and extension institutions and their functions in serving agriculture in the United States.

17. Information about places to be visited. That as much information as possible be given to the participant while in Washington about the States or locations to be visited either in the form of discussion or available written material.

18. Establish revised "In-Washington" program. That a special committee be designated to revise the current program and schedule of orientation activities in accordance with these recommendations and establish which agencies, groups, or individuals have responsibility for each segment. For example, which segments shall be handled by the Program Specialist? By the Program Committee? In group orientation?

ORIENTATION IN THE STATES

Orientation should be a continuing process. As the participant moves on to various points in the States and to new fields of interest and activity, the orientation process must be continued in order to keep the participant properly informed and adjusted to these new situations. This applies to all areas of contact on a State, county, or local basis.

19. Orientation at the colleges.

a. That the colleges, whenever possible, provide the participant with information on the history, geography, agriculture, and institutions of the State and other pertinent topics.

b. That orientation on university life, systems of academic study, etc., can best be given to the participant upon his arrival at the college in which he is to be enrolled. However, some emphasis on this could be included in the Washington orientation for participants who will be enrolling in regular college courses.

c. That the participant be given thorough information as to the close working relationships between the teaching, research, and extension functions at the college. Also that they be informed on the relationships between the various functions of the colleges and that of other State agencies and organizations.

20. Orientation at county or local levels.

a. Participants should be thoroughly informed on the duties and close working relationships of the various agencies and organizations working on a county or community basis. Particular attention should be given to familiarize the participant with life on an American farm and in an American community. This should include agency and organization activities, the church, the school, local business and industry, and other community activities.

FINAL REVIEW AND EVALUATION
AT TERMINATION OF STUDY IN THE UNITED STATES

The final review and evaluation period in Washington, just prior to the participant's return to his home country, is the period during which the USDA and ICA personnel have an opportunity to clarify any unanswered questions, help the participant in making plans for adjusting new practices and methods to conditions in his home country, and in stressing the importance of maintaining continuing contacts in the United States. In this field the committee offers the following recommendations:

21. Completion of objectives.

a. That thorough review of the objectives of the written program be conducted with the participant. Both positive and negative results would be valuable to planners in making future programs.

b. That, if the objectives have not been reached, a searching review and discussion be made to determine the reasons, and efforts be made to determine the circumstances surrounding the situation which prevented the participant from achieving the objectives outlined.

c. That interviewers should also seek to determine good aspects of the study period which were not outlined in the program in order that they may be included or spelled out in future programs for other foreign visitors.

d. That interviewers should seek to supplement or complete information which the participant desires by recommending or making available bulletins, books, periodicals, or other printed matter.

22. Adaptation to home country needs.

That the participant explain explicitly, preferably in writing, plans which he has for using information gained in the United States. He should also be questioned as to the practicality of adapting practices and techniques that may be useful in his country.

23. "Follow-up" and maintenance of contacts.

a. Because the participant's need for orientation in its broader sense continues as he reenters and occupies his career situation in the home country, USOM staffs and others should assist him to adapt, utilize and disseminate, or extend to others, appropriate learnings he has gained. Program specialists and other strategic persons in the USA should maintain effective follow-up contact with the participant through letters, literature and other effective means.

b. The participant should be reminded that the contacts which he has made in the United States can serve far into the future as a source of information in his field of study.

c. The participant should be impressed that he has and will continue to have information that he can contribute to the contacts which he has made. He should be assured that information which he submits to contacts in the United States would be appreciated, used, and developed.

d. The trainee should understand that failure to follow up his contacts in the United States leaves a doubt as to whether or not the program was beneficial to him or to his country. Maintaining contacts with persons in this country serves as an encouraging factor in programming other foreign students in the United States.

e. The participant should be encouraged to give a report on the success or failure of work which he does in his own country that has been based on experience and information gained during his study here.

